

2008 Turkey
SPIRITUAL GROWTH #3
SPIRITUAL MOTHERS AND FATHERS
1-30-08

JULIE

Tell BRONWYN'S STORY ON THE TRAIN when the Oxford professor asked her what she wanted to be.

His daughters were lawyers, doctors, and journalists. Bronwyn's answer? A PRINCESS!

ROGER

ASK AUDIENCE: When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

What do you think God wants us to be when we grow up?
Spiritual mothers and fathers.

As we grow up into the realm of spiritual young men and women we need to keep in mind the
THREE CLASSES OF CHRISTIANS

• <u>SLIDE</u> #: Unsundered	Sundered	Sundered
Deceived	Deceived	Deceived

The most dangerous moment in the life of a spiritual child may well be the moment that he or she decides to go on to maturity at any price—to move from Category One to Category Two. Guaranteed, Satan will offer a counterfeit at that moment. He offered one in the Garden; he will offer one to us when we decide to become spiritual men and women.

“Do you want to be like God?” he asked the first duo. Of course they did. “Here,” he said, “Eat the fruit and you will be like God, knowing good from evil.” But, he omitted the part about becoming like Satan in rebellion and isolation.

Would you like to be a spiritual man or woman at any price? Then, beware, the battle is enjoined. Counterfeits are not all alike—because we are not all alike—but their purpose is the same. They are intended to seduce us into a kind of life that is not the Life at all.

JULIE

•SLIDE SPIRITUAL MOTHERS AND FATHERS ARE MOVING INTO AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ETERNAL GOD OF THE UNIVERSE.

•SLIDE 1 John 2:13: I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.
1 John 2:14: I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.

The same characteristic is twice repeated—for emphasis.

The Bible is filled with examples of God's desire to be intimate with His children.

•**SLIDE #:** God blessing Abraham. God is about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 18:16-32: "When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.

Then the LORD said, "*Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?*" (18:17).

Then ensued the long discussion with Abraham pleading to save Sodom if 10 righteous men can be found.

•**SLIDE #:** Exodus 33:18: Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. *22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.*

•**SLIDE #:** Jeremiah: Jeremiah 1:5: "Before *I formed you in the womb I knew you*, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

•**SLIDE #:** David: Psalm 139:3: "You discern my going out and my lying down; *you are familiar (caringly involved) with all my ways.*"

•**SLIDE #:** Jesus washing disciples' feet: Few things are more intimate and humbling than washing some one else's feet.

ROGER

STORY: Ex-con pastor in San Jose, 46 years old. Getting married for first time. Asked him, "How did you propose?"

Took her to church at 11 pm. after a date. Told her to be obedient: Go into the restroom and take off your nylons. She did it. Took her up on stage and turned on spotlight. Took out a basin of water and a towel and began to wash her feet.

"Most humble service Jesus ever did was wash your feet. I want to wash your feet. I want to serve you for the rest of your life." She was crying.

Put down towel and took out a ring, looked up into her eyes and asked, "Will you marry me?"

Doesn't this sound just like Jesus kneeling and washing the feet of the Disciples. Few things are more humbling and intimate than washing some one's feet.

JULIE

•**SLIDE #:** John 17:3: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Most Christians do not define "eternal life" like Jesus. Eternal life for many describes how long we live. We live forever. We get to live in Heaven forever. Jesus, however, described eternal life in terms of a deepening intimate relationship.

ROGER

SLIDE: DRAW Vs of relationships: numbers and levels of intimacy. Acquaintances, casual friends, close friends, intimate friends

EXERCISE: How intimate are you with Jesus Christ? Is He an acquaintance? Casual friend? Close friend? Intimate friend? What does it do to your heart to know that God wants to be your most intimate friend?

ROGER

•**SLIDE #:** SPIRITUAL PARENTS PARTNER WITH GOD IN SHEPHERDING GOD'S PEOPLE.

Jesus used many metaphors to describe His office and character, but He loved best to paint Himself as a shepherd.

The crowds in Galilee reminded Him of sheep without a shepherd. He was sent to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He pictured Himself in the future judgment doing what shepherds do—separating sheep from goats. He said, "I know every sheep by name." He declared, "The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

Jesus chose to give this same title of Shepherd to Peter when He commissioned him to establish the church (John 21): "Feed my lambs.... Tend my sheep.... Feed my sheep...." In other words, Jesus commissioned Peter to do a shepherd's work.

The history of the Christian church began with Jesus saying to the leader who was to head up the work of disciplining the nations: "I am a shepherd, you be a shepherd, too." The heart of a man or woman is like the heart of a sheep. It beats at the sight of its shepherd.

By the way, when is the last time you saw a shepherd herding sheep down Main Street?

Spiritual Shepherds do their best work on the backside of the desert where nobody is looking.

JULIE

I watched from the shade of a tree as my eldest daughter walked away from the High School Administration building, her head down, her mind deep in thought. With so little spring in her step and hunched-over shoulders I knew she was hurting.

Peed on debate cards.

A deep sense of compassion welled up from deep within my soul. I thought of Jesus' declaration in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

It was as if God were saying to me, "Julie, it is so hard for me to minister to her needs alone. Why don't you yoke up beside me and let's do this together."

God's yoke was designed for two. He was inviting me to join Him in the harness in caring for my daughter. One of my primary jobs as a parent is to minister to my children's aloneness needs. No one else can fill the role of father for my children like I can. If I don't do it, no one else can. I partner up with Jesus in caring for my children by intentionally getting in that yoke beside Jesus.

As we mature spiritually, we get in the harness along side of Jesus in order to minister effectively to spiritual children. The world is filled with lonely spiritual children.

This is the shepherding work of mothers and fathers.

ROGER

- SLIDE #:** SPIRITUAL MOTHERS AND FATHERS HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD DEEP WITHIN THEIR INNER SPIRITS.

Holy Spirit to human spirit.

STORY: Lee Ann's aneurism
(guts to tell her)

JULIE

- SLIDE:** SPIRITUAL MOTHERS AND FATHERS VIEW LIFE FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE.

•**SLIDE:** and **DRAW:** EXPLAIN the spiritual growth chart.
They interpret the Bible from the resurrection side of the cross.

Paul's progression: Read from 2 Corinthians 11:21-23. Paul is giving his resume.
Hebrew, Israelite, Abraham's descendants, worked harder, shipwrecked, more persecutions, suffered the most.

READ 1 Tim 1:15-16: Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

I am legally blind. If I take my glasses off, I'll never find them again. When I walk into my house without my glasses, it looks perfectly clean. When I put on my bifocals, I see the spider webs and dust bunnies. If I use a magnifying glass, I see the bacteria, germs, and dust mites.

ROGER

- SLIDE:** SPIRITUAL MOTHERS AND FATHERS UNDERSTAND THAT GOD IS LARGER AND MORE COMPLEX THAN ANYONE CAN COMPREHEND.

•**SLIDE:** and **DRAW:** As we climb the mountains of maturity and we discover that there is so much more on the other side: There are other mountain peak yet to scale.

Refuse to dogmatize on earth because of a growing understanding that god is bigger than anyone can fathom.

People who delude themselves into thinking that they have a monopoly on understanding God are like the man who waded out into the surf off the California coast, looked up and down the coast

line, tasted the water, felt the waves, and cried out gleefully, "I know what the Pacific Ocean is like." At the same time a man in China waded out three or four yards into the Pacific, made the same observations and declared, "I know what the Pacific Ocean is like."

Neither of them "know" the Pacific Ocean in the slightest. For them to take their little experiences and start arguing over who knows it best is absolutely ridiculous! They are both ignorant as to the depths and secrets of the ocean.

How many times do we see spiritual children who have touched God in one small place and think that they know God begin arguing over their limited experiences with God, On the other hand, spiritual mothers and fathers have touched God in so many broad, unbelievable ways, that they understand how little they know—and how much more of Him is left to experience.

Greg Swartz: pastor neighbor, church members go to his church in morning and to ours in evening. Told them to stop because we didn't theologically the gift of tongues like they did. Saw him bringing his daughter to our day school. "Greg, the way our country is going we may both one day be on trial for following Jesus Christ. When we stand before the firing squad, neither one of us will care in the slightest what each other thinks about spiritual gifts! The only thing that really matters is whether or not we know Jesus." We subsequently became very good friends. He even invited me to speak in his church.

- SLIDE: Only a few essentials: very little else matters.
Jesus is 100% God.
Jesus was virgin born
He died a substitutionary death on the cross for the sin of the entire world.
He was physically resurrected.
Physical body resurrection
All who believe in Him as their personal Lord and Savior have their sins forgiven and receive an eternal relationship with God the Father.

If we get these essentials right, we will be reconciled to God and spend eternity in Heaven with Him!

JULIE

- SLIDE: SPIRITUAL PARENTS NEVER OUTGROW THE BASIC FUNDAMENTALS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE—BE WARNED.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-2).

- SLIDE: AND DRAW: The world, the flesh, and the devil are three powerful enemies of the Christian life.

John declared that spiritual children have overcome the world (1 John 5:4).
John taught that spiritual young men and women have overcome the evil one (1 John 2:14).
We will struggle with the flesh until the day we die.

Spiritual children often imagine that as they grow on maturity that they will be tempted less and less. Surely, Satan's advances wouldn't touch a growing Christian.

Moses strikes the rock in anger at the end of his ministry.

At the age of fifty-five, David—the man after God’s own heart looked out the window and noticed that Bathsheba had forgotten to draw the bathroom shades. Later that evening he climbed into bed with her. David never got over the consequences of his sin. Israel never got over it, either. David’s family never got over it. David should have known better. He did. But, the Flesh, our old sin nature, is a powerful force within each of us.

If Satan can get a David to fall, he can destroy a whole family, a whole nation, a whole empire. The fall of a spiritual mother or father causes much more dastardly destruction than the fall of a spiritual child. Therefore, the techniques, deceits and deceptions used on spiritual men and women go far beyond what is needed seduce a spiritual child.

Of course, as in David’s case, sometimes open window shades are all it takes.

ROGER

- SLIDE #:** SPIRITUAL MOTHERS AND FATHERS ARE SO INTIMATE WITH GOD THAT THEY FULLY EXPERIENCE HIS COMFORT WHEN THEY ARE HURTING.

- SLIDE #:** 2 Corinthians 1:3-5: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort , 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

STORY: Relocation-\$600K short-contractor won’t building-suicide contemplation-\$1400 check-Geode

- SLIDE #:** “The people who know me best are the ones who know me in my pain.” God knows me in my deepest pain. He knows me that well.

JULIE

- SLIDE #:** SPIRITUAL PARENTS ACTUALLY HURT FOR GOD WHEN HE HURTS.

He loves, feels, gets angry, experiences rejection, grieves over the pain and suffering sin brings in the lives of others. Hopes for people to come to salvation

- SLIDE #:** Genesis 6:6: “The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”

God grieves over the devastation of sin.

Story of Angels cheering as Israel escapes through the Red Sea. Watch as Egyptians follow into Red Sea and the wind stops blowing and the entire army of Egyptian soldiers drown.

A great cry of victory and delight breaks out.

Then they look over to the Throne to see what God is doing. He is weeping.

He made those soldiers. He wanted them to come to Him. He is weeping.

ROGER

- SLIDE #: “The people who know God best are the ones who know Him in His pain.”

Illustration of girl on airplane from LA to TUS. Talked to her, about 23 or 24. Recently married.

Talked about her husband and relationship.

“I am going to Tucson for my Dad’s funeral, you know.”

“Oh, I am so sorry. This must hurt a lot.”

“Well, we weren’t very close.”

“I will bet that was not your choice.”

Dad divorced from her mother when she was a child.

“You must struggle with so much rejection.”

“I think it was because as I grew older that I looked so much like my mother and he did not want to have anything to do with me.”

Now what am I thinking. Sorrow for her. Then thought of that dad. What had he missed! He missed a relationship with the lovely young lady sitting next to me. What a loss. She wanted to know and be known, to love and be loved—and he missed it.

God was hurting for both because of the pain and for what they both missed.

Time to minister to God. He was broken hearted over the pain and confusion in her life.

Get practical in joining in His suffering.

STORY of pastor being fired, losing house, troubles at church. Invited to Holy Land at last minute by a friend, decides to go. Sunday in Gethsemane: “God, I want to experienced what you experienced.” Back room by altar. Kneeled to pray.

Tour guide comes to find him. Guide comes in, blood everywhere. Nose capillaries broke and giant nose bleed. Kept handkerchief with blood stains.

JULIE

Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.

Jesus weeping in the Garden

Can’t you imagine the empathy you would feel in your heart for him as you watched Him weep?

Can you picture yourself comforting Him? “I am so sorry you are going through this. I know you’re in agony. I wish it wouldn’t have to be like this. You are not alone. We are here with you. We love you. We are praying for you.” Your tears are intermingled with His.

“But,” you say, “Jesus is not here. I can’t do that for Him.”

Sure you can.

- SLIDE #: Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 25:34-40: Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Caring for Jesus by caring for His people is what spiritual mothers and fathers do.

ROGER

- SLIDE #:** EVANGELISM IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF SPIRITUAL MOTHERS AND FATHERS.

When I was younger in my journey I imagined that reaching the mountain tops of spiritual maturity would be like spiritual retirement. We would come to church and sing a lot. We would fellowship with all of our spiritual friends. Most all of our problems would be over—or at least victoriously overcome by the life and power of Christ!

- SLIDE #:** Mark 4:28-29 “All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

Kernels of corn were never designed to remain on the corn cob, basking in fellowship with the other kernels of corn. Farmers do not grow corn just for the sake of the corn. Mature corn is either eaten or used as seed corn for next year’s crop—it is planted and dies (disintegrates) to bring life to another field of corn.

By the way this concept explains why so many spiritual children have trouble leading folks to Christ, and why spiritual mothers and fathers are so much more proficient in evangelism. Stalks do not reproduce stalks. Only corn matured can be placed in the ground to produce more stalks.

*Hinds Feet on High Places*¹ by Hannah Hurnard is an allegory of spiritual maturity about a little girl named Much Afraid who lived in the Valley of Humiliation with her family, the Fearings. She wanted to go to the spiritual high places and experience the true love of the Shepherd—of giving love and being loved in return. But she had crooked little feet and a twisted little mouth. Her chances of a successful journey were minimal. Besides, her cousins, Craven Fear, Bitterness, Spiteful, Gloomy, and even her Aunt Dismal Forebodings, had their hearts set on keeping her from a successful journey. Yet, the call of the Shepherd was strong. In a moment of supreme courage, aided by other Christ followers, she ran to find the Shepherd.

Because of her twisted, crippled feet the Shepherd provided two companions to help her over the rough spots. The Shepherd introduced her to Suffering.” Much Afraid touched Suffering’s hand. It was cold and she pulled back and said, “I don’t want her.”

“The other companion I have selected for you is “Sorrow”, He said.

Again Much Afraid reached out and touched the hand of Sorrow. It was also cold. She pulled back again and said. “I don’t want her either!”

The Shepherd replied, “In your particular situation Suffering and Sorrow are the guides best able to lead you to the high places.” Thus, she commenced her journey.

When she finally reached the High Places, her twisted face was straightened out and her feet were strengthened. She leapt like a hind—a deer—through the spiritual high places with Christ. Sorrow was transformed into Joy; Suffering was transformed into Peace. Much Afraid was transformed into Grace and Glory.

Near the end of the book, Grace and Glory awakened and looked down in the Valley of Humiliation. She thought about her family living in misery down there. How much they needed the

¹ Hannah Hurnard, *Hinds Feet on High Places*, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, Ohio, 1987.

Shepherd, too! She began to weep and then asked Joy and Peace, "What about my family? What will become of them? Who will go and help them?"

Joy replied, "If the Shepherd can turn Sorrow into Joy and Suffering into Peace, and Much Afraid into Grace and Glory, then I believe that the Shepherd can transform Dismal Foreboding into Praise and Thanksgiving. He can do a marvelous work, as well, with Craven Fear and Spiteful and Gloomy and all the other cousins you have down there."

"But who will go? Who is going to tell them?"

Immediately, the Shepherd was at her side. She turned to the Shepherd and began to plead, "Can't you send somebody? Who will help my family?"

A smile creased the Shepherd's face. He looked deep into her eyes and said, "Why, that is your job. That is why I brought you here. Now, you go back down to the valley below and lead your family to me."

This is the essence of the cycle of spiritual growth. We start out as children; we grow to be young men and women; we mature to be mothers and fathers. Then, we descend back down into the valley and help others on their journeys to the High Places.

JULIE

Nabila's story

Secret police called her in. You are in charge of this conversation. Relax guys-we know why we're here. Let's do it. The lead guy apologized. I'm sorry, It's my first time to interrogate a Christian. "That's okay. I'll help you." Basic questions. Went straight to gospel. Why have you become a Christian. I discovered that I was a sinner. Went to Genesis. I'm going to tell you what God's heart is for mankind, before there was any religion. We're not fight about religion. Let me tell you what Christ did for me. I hated myself. I hated Tunisia. I hated the police. After I received Jesus He showed me my worth. He gave me a love for my country. He even gave me a love for you, because inside your uniform is a man with needs, fears and questions. A man Jesus is waiting to love. The police chief said "Thank you. I have never heard anybody talk about God this way."

SLIDE#: EXERCISE: Share an experience when God comforted you when you were hurting. Have you ever hurt for Jesus when He was hurting? What might He be hurting over right now? Consider talking to God and comforting Him over a hurt he might be experiencing.

JULIE

I'll Love You Forever

•**SLIDE #:** A Mother held her new baby and very slowly rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

And while she held him, she sang:

I'll love you forever,
I'll like you for always,
As long as I'm living
My baby you'll be.

•SLIDE #: The baby grew. He grew and he grew and he grew. He grew until he was two years old, and he ran all around the house. He pulled all the books off the shelves. He pulled all the food out of the refrigerator and he took his mother's watch and flushed it down the toilet. Sometimes his mother would say, "This kid is driving me CRAZY!"

•SLIDE #: But at night time, when that two-year-old was quiet, she opened the door to his room, crawled across the floor, looked up over the side of his bed; and if he was really asleep she picked him up and rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

While she rocked him she sang:

I'll love you forever,
I'll like you for always,
As long as I'm living
My baby you'll be.

•SLIDE #: The little boy grew. He grew and he grew and he grew. He grew until he was nine years old. And he never wanted to come in for dinner, he never wanted to take a bath, and when grandma visited he always said bad words. Sometimes his mother wanted to sell him to the zoo!

•SLIDE #: But at night time, when he was asleep, the mother quietly opened the door to his room, crawled across the floor and looked up over the side of the bed. If he was really asleep, she picked up that nine-year-old boy and rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

And while she rocked him, she sang:

I'll love you forever,
I'll like you for always,
As long as I'm living
My baby you'll be.

•SLIDE #: The boy grew. He grew and he
Grew and he grew. He grew until he was
a teenager. He had strange friends
and he wore strange cloths and he
listened to strange music.
Sometimes the mother felt like she
Was in a zoo!

•SLIDE #: But at night time, when that teenager
Was asleep, the mother opened the door
To his room, crawled across the
Floor and looked up over the side
Of the bed. If he was really asleep she
Picked up that great big boy and rocked
Him back and forth, back and forth,
Back and forth.
While she rocked him she sang:
 I'll love you forever,
 I'll like you for always,
 As long as I'm living
 My baby you'll be.

•SLIDE #: That teenager grew. He grew and he
Grew and he grew. He grew until
He was a grown-up man. He left home
And got a house across town.

•SLIDE #: But sometimes on dark nights
The mother got into her car and drove
Across town.

•SLIDE #: If all the lights in her son's house
Were out, she opened his bedroom
Window, crawled across the floor,
And looked up over the side of this bed.
If that great big man was really
Asleep she picked him up and rocked
Him back and forth, back and forth,
Back and forth.
And while she rocked him she sang:
 I'll love you forever,
 I'll like you for always,
 As long as I'm living
 My baby you'll be.

•SLIDE #: ell, that mother, she got older.
She got older and older and older.
One day she called up her son and said,
“You’d better come see me because
I’m very old and sick.”
So her son came to see her.
When he came in the door she tried
To sing the song. She sang:
 I’ll love you forever,
 I’ll like you for always...
But she couldn’t finish because she
was too old and sick.

•SLIDE #: The son went to his mother.
He picked her up and rocked her
Back and forth, back and forth,
Back and forth.
And he sang this song:
 I’ll love you forever,
 I’ll like you for always,
 As long as I’m living
 My Mommy you’ll be.

•SLIDE #: When the son came home
That night, he stood for along time
At the top of the stains.

•SLIDE #: Then he went into the room
Where his very new baby daughter
Was sleeping. He picked her up in
His arms and very slowly rocked
Her back and forth, back and forth,
Back and forth.
And while he rocked her he sang:
 I’ll love you forever,
 I’ll like you for always,
 As long as I’m living
 My baby you’ll be.